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Hilles, Charles Dewey

Address of
Hon. Charles D. Hilles...

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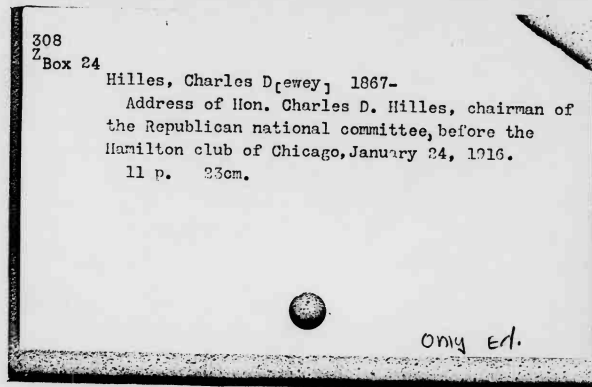
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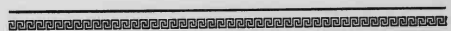
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Address of
Hon. CHARLES D. HILLES
Chairman of the
Republican National Committee
before the
HAMILTON CLUB, OF CHICAGO
January 24, 1916



Mar. 15, 1916-B3B

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Hamilton Club:

The officers of the Republican National Committee and members of the Sub-Committee on Arrangements for the Convention of 1916 wish me to return thanks for the gracious hospitality of the Hamilton Club. It is a rare privilege to meet your members and the important officials of your city under such agreeable auspices. Your presence here during the busy hours of the day and your enthusiasm for the cause we represent are a very significant index of the present Republican mind of the entire country.

The sub-committee of the National Committee is beginning to formulate plans for a great Convention—one of the most important Conventions in the history of our country. It is to be held in Chicago largely through the intelligent effort of the representative committee of your Club.

The Committee Meeting in Washington in December was filled with good augury for the coming campaign. It was harmonious and enthusiastic. It ratified the reapportionment resolution which, while it does not provide proportional representation in our Conventions, provides an equitable basis of representation. The unanimous optimism regarding the outcome of the Presidential election, the entire absence of factional disputes, and the manifest determination of the Committee members and hundreds of other Republicans who were attracted to Washington by the meeting, to nominate the best possible candidate for President and support him without regard to their own personal affiliations, afforded the greatest possible encouragement to all who desire to see the affairs of the nation taken out of the hands of a party which, time and again, has shown in

every possible manner its absolute and hopeless incompetence.

If it were not for the abnormal conditions created by the war in Europe President Wilson and his friends would have no argument to offer for his re-election. Every man of affairs knows that the bad conditions of the spring of 1914 would have been still worse but for the Great War and that there would probably have been a return to the industrial stagnation and widespread unemployment through which the country went under previous Democratic administrations. As it is, adventitious circumstances have furnished the President with hope of political salvation this year, but that hope was not buoyed by the results of the elections of last November. The Republicans carried Massachusetts on national issues despite the fact that a popular Democratic Governor received 56,000 more votes than were cast for Mr. Wilson in 1912. We came within a few hundred votes of carrying the Democratic State of Kentucky. We elected the Assembly in the State of New York by 110,000, carried Philadelphia by 90,000 and Cincinnati by a larger majority than ever before given to a candidate for Mayor. In Maryland our candidate for Governor received 116,136 votes, whereas Mr. Wilson in 1912 received 112,674. We carried the day in President Wilson's home State of New Jersey. In the 23d Congressional District in New York City, in an election fought on national questions, with the heaviest vote ever polled, and in a District which heretofore has always been Democratic, the Republican candidate, Hon. William S. Bennet, won by over 700. That election was devoid of even a crumb of comfort for the Democrats and it reflected a condition which is nationwide.

Very recently I sent a questionnaire to each of the 3,300 members of Republican State and County Committees throughout the nation, to which I had a prompt

response. It is the consensus of opinion that the record of the Wilson Administration insures Republican victory this year. The President's conduct of affairs of government has been a keen disappointment even to men who supported him—and he received two million less than a majority of the votes cast. An expression of my own opinion as to the course that will be pursued by the general staff officers of any other political party would be injudicious obtrusion, but from every State, save one, the Republican committeemen report that the breach of 1912 may be regarded as practically healed. There is no silly sentiment that victory will come no matter what our party may do between now and November. We know that there is a man's-sized fight before us. Our victories of last November did not come as manna, but were achieved in the sweat of our brows. Wise action will bring victory and that kind of action will be carried on. There is a plethora of strong, well-seasoned timber from which to choose our candidate and a wealth of material from which to construct the platform.

President Wilson was quoted as saying to the Democratic National Committee that the Republican Party would be compelled to confine its discussion this year to the tariff, but he will find that a united and militant opposition to Democracy will attack that party at a dozen vulnerable points. One point of attack will be the vicious paternalistic and socialistic project of a government-owned and government-operated merchant marine. The Republican Party has always contended for the upbuilding of the merchant trade fleet, but has insisted that aid shall be extended as an encouragement to private initiative and enterprise, to the end that American ships may be in financial position to compete with the subsidized fleets of other great nations. The leasing project, which the President now proposes, shows a most perverse reluctance to drop the subject and does not satisfy the situation. The vessels to be

built or purchased by the board would have to be leased at a rate low enough to overcome the present legal hindrances to competition before they would attract private capital, and such a rate would prove a cumulative loss to the Government. The revised project still embodies the principle of government ownership, which the leasing system will not make less dangerous or less offensive. Not the least of the many objectionable phases of this proposal of the President's is the fact that international questions of grave character must naturally arise in times of stress when merchant vessels are government owned, either directly or indirectly.

The President will be attacked for his abolition of the Tariff Board. The Republican Party voluntarily pledged itself to the people to submit every schedule of the tariff law to the careful, intelligent and patient investigation of a permanent, expert, independent Tariff Board and to adjust rates in the light of the facts disclosed by such investigation. The Democratic Party failed either to provide funds for the continuance of the Tariff Board or to make some other provision for securing the information requisite for intelligent tariff legislation.

The Democratic Party will receive widespread and grave censure for its wanton, unprecedented and unmeasured extravagance, particularly in view of its solemn pledge in the platform of 1912 to retrench and bring about important reductions in the running expenses of the Government.

The President's policy of exemption by special statute of certain classes of citizens from the application of the anti-Trust Laws is a menace to the country, and we believe that even the beneficiaries of this flagrant class legislation will join in the censure of a party responsible for such a cheap and transparent appeal for votes.

The passage of the Seamen's Bill and the affirmative act of the President which made it law will receive very general censure when the full measure of the damage it has done shall have been disclosed. It has already paralyzed the Pacific shipping industry and will drive the American ships from the high seas when peace in Europe restores normal competition on the Atlantic.

So, too, in the imposition by the Democrats of a war tax in times of peace, the Republicans feel they have a warhorse already booted and spurred and chafing for action. It is generally recognized that an attempt, manifestly abortive, has been made to hide Democratic extravagance, inefficiency, and their attendant ills, under the cloak of unforseeable and unpreventable adverse conditions, and from every State it is reported that Democrats shun the very mention of the war tax as they would the plague.

Then the high cost of living hangs heavily over the heads of the reckless demagogues who made it a political issue in 1912. The Republican Party met that issue with candor and told the whole truth about it, but the Democrats denied that rising costs were directly traceable to world-wide conditions. They promised a reduction in the cost of all foodstuffs. Instead of a reduction, there has been a horizontal rise in the cost, and until we entered upon this period of factitious prosperity the increase in the cost of commodities was attended by a violent decline in the earning power of the people.

Then there is the President's Mexican policy—or rather the absence of one. In all the fair history of the United States there was never written so disgraceful a page as that which must contain the record of Woodrow Wilson's conduct of our relations with Mexico. His entire Mexican policy has been dominated by a single and an ignoble factor, hatred of Huerta, because Huerta refused to obey the Wilson mandate that he retire from the Mexican Presidency. In his determination to be

revenged upon Huerta, Mr. Wilson has sacrificed all else. To his blind pursuit of that hatred is to be charged the loss of countless American lives—not alone the sailors and marines who fell at Vera Cruz, but those who have been murdered and outraged and despoiled of all their earthly possessions by bandits and insurgent bands throughout that unfortunate Republic. And it is the belief of many competent judges of international relations that to the supineness with which this Administration witnessed the outrages perpetrated on Americans in Mexico is largely due that contempt exhibited by European nations which has resulted in the further loss of American lives and the wanton disregard of the rights of American exporters and shippers. The moving about in the Mexican matter was not mere stubborn aimlessness. Armed invasion of Mexico was undertaken on the futile pretext that Huerta's troops must be coerced to salute the flag of the United States, while the actual purpose was merely to compel Huerta to resign and flee. And when the real object was accomplished no salute was demanded, but the first salute fired was by American battleships when, Carranza having been recognized, they were ordered by Washington to raise the Mexican flag and fire a salute in its honor. Over and over again, dire threats were forwarded from Washington to the insurgent leaders; they were warned that if they continued to outrage and murder Americans they would be held personally accountable, be held "to a strict accountability," and they laughed the warnings to scorn, continuing their course of pillage and murder and outrage. Mr. Wilson did nothing. Why? Because he was unwilling to check those who were assisting him to gain revenge on Huerta. And, finally, fearing to continue his policy of "watchful waiting" until after the fall elections, he recognized Carranza, the man who had most persistently and flagrantly flaunted the United States. And now that Carranza has been recognized

there is little promise of improvement in Mexico. The murder and outrage and rapine of Americans is being carried on almost as cheerfully as before Carranza was recognized and doubtless will be until there are no more Americans left to murder—or until the foreign affairs of this country are confided to other hands.

Deplorable as has been Mr. Wilson's Mexican policy in itself, reckless and heartless as was his Indianapolis declaration that the Mexican bandits would be left undeterred, to shed as much blood as they pleased in the settlement of their affairs, and sad as have been the financial ruin and murder of Americans in Mexico, still more distressing has been the effect of the Mexican policy in other foreign lands, throughout Central and South America, in Europe, and probably in Asia.

Inefficiency has marked the conduct of every department of the Government; inefficiency in the selection of officials, inefficiency and insincerity in the observance of both the letter and spirit of civil service reform, insincerity in the appointment of officials to govern the Philippines, inefficiency and insincerity amounting to downright deception in the attempts to deceive the public regarding the condition of the Treasury, where Secretary McAdoo has employed the odious methods of high finance to juggle the Treasury statements and has sought to take advantage of the unfamiliarity of the general public with the nation's accounts to conceal the deplorable deficit. No greater insult was ever offered to the intelligence of the American voters than that involved in Mr. McAdoo's effort to flimflam them regarding the actual condition of the Treasury.

The tariff record of the Wilson Administration is alone sufficient to insure a Republican victory. Between the Democratic policy of a tariff for revenue only and the Republican policy of a protective tariff there is a sharp conflict. The two policies are irreconcilable, so that between these two political parties a great economic

gulf is fixed. With no war in this country and with the imports not materially lessened by the war in Europe, the Democratic tariff has proved so grave a failure that the Administration found it necessary to impose a special "war tax" which, according to Secretary McAdoo's figures, takes out of the pockets of the people \$82,000,000 annually. And, to make good both the lack of revenue-producing power of the Democratic tariff and the general deficit due to maladministration in other directions, Mr. McAdoo would increase the income tax, applying it to smaller incomes and advancing the surtax. All this at a time when the receipts in the form of duties laid on imports are equal to only 11% of all imports, both free and dutiable. Deducting the loss of sugar revenue which will accrue on the first of May, our rate under the Underwood Bill, as drawn (and unless amended for the sake of expediency by repealing the free sugar clause) will be brought down to 8.26%. This is lower than Free Trade England, which is now 9% on all importations. This compares with 8.93% in Germany in 1908, 8.27% in France in 1908, 10.27% in Japan, 9.18% in Italy and 39.88% in Russia. Is it any wonder that we are apprehensive lest we shall become the dumping ground of Europe after the war? So much for the signal failure made by the Democratic Party in its efforts to enact that Democratic ideal, "a tariff for revenue only."

Sagacious analysts of business conditions constantly warn the people to be prepared for the industrial warfare which is certain to follow the restoration of peace, reminding them that when the last gun is fired on the battlefields of Europe the millions of men now under arms will return to the factory and the mine and the farm, and that unless that time finds this country prepared to meet the restoration of industrial competition there must follow a day of reckoning here which can spell nothing but disaster. Notwithstanding this, Mr.

Wilson failed in his recent Message to propose legislation on this subject suited to the needs of the hour. It is, therefore, obvious that when the abnormal industrial conditions of today end with the war we shall face a situation to which the ineptitude of Democratic statesmanship will be glaringly unequal.

Mr. Wilson is mistaken in his view that the Republican Party must depend upon the tariff issue in this fight. If he believes it, he little knows the history of the party or the temper of its adherents. It is true that it has devoted much time to the preservation and expansion of our industries and the interests of the workingmen of this country, but the President cannot dismiss it as a business body, scientific and statistical, fitted only for thinking on the tariff. It has been said that parties are somewhat like generations of men. The characteristics of any single generation cannot properly be studied without some knowledge of those that have gone before. Occasionally a party "comes up suddenly on some transient wave of popular excitement, growing out of events essentially temporary in their nature, or springs from some fictitious issue, magnified into importance for the time being by the lack of any real fundamental question affecting the Government." But the Republican Party was born in and of the great struggle for the sacred cause of freedom. It was the child of the conscience of the Nation. It existed, in embryo, almost from the very beginning of the Government and it has been the most important, most courageous, most constructive, most moral and most powerful of all the political agencies that have thus far arisen in the United States. Underlying all its labors for wise economic and domestic policies it has had strong convictions and has stood for the honor of the country. That has been its sustaining strength. The Republican Party believes that there is only one

commanding genius in the nation today, and that is the genius of Americanism.

That the abject failure of the President's domestic policies will be forgiven, even if not forgotten, as a recompense for keeping us out of the European struggle, seems to be the solitary liferaft left for the Democratic Party when their ship begins to "go by the head." It is incredible, however, that, with the need for curative legislation to meet economic conditions arising out of contemporary events, our people will again entrust their affairs to the Democracy. There are features of the record of the Wilson Administration which will compel intelligent and patriotic Americans to do all in their power to unseat, next November, those who have so effectively and conclusively demonstrated the incapacity of themselves and their party to administer the affairs of the Government with credit to themselves and benefit to the people. The more the least prejudiced observer examines the record of the Wilson Administration the more convinced he will become that an intelligent electorate will embrace the first opportunity to repudiate it. It is the knowledge and appreciation of this, widespread among the people, that, more than anything else, makes very propitious the outlook for Republican victory in November.

**END OF
TITLE**